

A PUBLIC MEETING OF THE CAMBRIDGE CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

October 24, 2023, @ 5:30 p.m.
REMOTE ONLY – VIA ZOOM

Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation at meetings of the Cambridge Charter Review Committee.

The zoom link is: <https://cambridgema.zoom.us/j/83253118929>

Meeting ID: 832 5311 8929

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Agenda Items – Tuesday, October 24, 2023

- I. Roll Call 5:30 PM
- II. Introduction by Chair, Kathy Born
- III. Adoption of Meeting Minutes from the meeting of October 10, 2023
- IV. Meeting Materials Submitted to the Committee to be placed on file
 - Communications from Committee Members
 - i.* A communication was received from Kathleen Born, regarding the Charter Committee final report
 - Communications from Council Members
 - Communications from the Public
 - Other Meeting Materials
- V. Public Comment
 - Members of the public are invited to share their ideas or comments with the committee.
- VI. Public Engagement Article: Resident Assembly
 - **Facilitator:** Anna, Pat, Mike. **Goal:** Finish Remaining Decision Points
 - i.* Resident Assembly Decision Points
- VII. Elections Article
 - **Facilitator:** Anna. **Goal:** Discuss decision points of the elections article and vote on each decision point.
 - i.* Elections Article Decision Points
 - ii.* Elections Article Draft Language
 - iii.* Elections - Supplemental Information

VIII. Legislative Article

- **Facilitator:** Anna. **Goal:** Begin review of the legislative article, flagging any items for discussion or questions
 - i.* Legislative Article Draft

**MINUTES OF THE CAMBRIDGE
CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2023**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Kathleen Born, Chair
Kaleb Abebe
Jessica DeJesus Acevedo
Mosammat Faria Afreen
Nikolas Bowie
Kevin Chen
Max Clermont
Jennifer Gilbert
Kai Long
Patrick Magee
Mina Makarios
Lisa Peterson
Ellen Shachter
Susan Shell
Jim Stockard

The Cambridge Charter Review Committee held a meeting on Tuesday, October 10, 2023. The meeting was called to order at approximately 5:30p.m. by the Chair of the Committee, Kathleen Born. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, this meeting was remote via Zoom.

At the request of the Chair, Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Kaleb Abebe – Present
Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Present
Mosammat Faria Afreen – Present
Nikolas Bowie – Absent*
Kevin Chen – Absent
Max Clermont – Absent
Jennifer Gilbert – Absent*
Kai Long – Present
Patrick Magee – Present
Mina Makarios – Absent*
Lisa Peterson – Present
Ellen Shachter – Present
Susan Shell – Present
Jim Stockard – Present
Kathleen Born – Present

Present – 10, Absent – 5. Quorum established.

*Member Nikolas Bowie was marked present at 5:36p.m.
*Member Jennifer Gilbert was marked present at 5:39p.m.
*Member Mina Makarios was marked present at 6:36p.m.

The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Susan Shell who made a motion to adopt the meeting minutes from September 12, 2023 and September 26, 2023.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Kaleb Abebe – Yes

Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Yes

Mosammat Faria Afreen – Yes

Nikolas Bowie – Yes

Kevin Chen – Absent

Max Clermont – Absent

Jennifer Gilbert – Absent

Kai Long – Yes

Patrick Magee – Yes

Mina Makarios – Absent

Lisa Peterson – Yes

Ellen Shachter – Yes

Susan Shell – Yes

Jim Stockard – Yes

Kathleen Born – Yes

Yes – 11, No – 0, Absent – 4. Motion passed.

The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Ellen Shachter who made a motion to adopt communications from Committee members.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Kaleb Abebe – Yes

Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Yes

Mosammat Faria Afreen – Yes

Nikolas Bowie – Yes

Kevin Chen – Absent

Max Clermont – Absent

Jennifer Gilbert – Yes

Kai Long – Yes

Patrick Magee – Yes

Mina Makarios – Absent

Lisa Peterson – Yes

Ellen Shachter – Yes

Susan Shell – Yes

Jim Stockard – Yes

Kathleen Born – Yes

Yes – 12, No – 0, Absent – 3. Motion passed.

The Chair, Kathleen Born opened Public Comment.

Jameson Quinn shared that they strongly urge the Committee to consider the possibility of equal voting.

Anna Corning, Project Manager, opened the discussion to Committee members on the Resident Assembly Draft Decision Points. The Resident Assembly Draft Decision Points document, as well as the Resident Assembly draft language, were provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Patrick Magee who made a motion for the Committee to establish a Resident Assembly in the Charter.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Kaleb Abebe – Yes

Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Yes

Mosammat Faria Afreen – Yes

Nikolas Bowie – Yes

Kevin Chen – Absent

Max Clermont – Absent

Jennifer Gilbert – Yes

Kai Long – Yes

Patrick Magee – Yes

Mina Makarios – Absent

Lisa Peterson – Yes

Ellen Shachter – Yes

Susan Shell – Yes

Jim Stockard – Yes

Kathleen Born – Yes

Yes – 12, No – 0, Absent – 3. Motion passed.

The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Jim Stockard who made a motion to approve the Purpose section (section 1) language of the Resident Assembly draft to read: In order to expand access to City government generally and include voices not typically heard in decision making, the City Council has the authority to establish and maintain one or more Resident Assemblies.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Kaleb Abebe – Yes

Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – No

Mosammat Faria Afreen – Yes

Nikolas Bowie – Yes

Kevin Chen – Absent

Max Clermont – Absent

Jennifer Gilbert – Yes

Kai Long – Yes

Patrick Magee – Yes

Mina Makarios – Absent

Lisa Peterson – Yes

Ellen Shachter – Yes

Susan Shell – No

Jim Stockard – Yes

Kathleen Born – Yes

Yes – 10, No – 2, Absent – 3. Motion passed.

Anna Corning shared that she would like to take a straw poll on whether the Committee would like to establish whether the resident assembly would proceed as an advisory body or have decision making power. There were nine members who voted in favor of the decision making power, three members in favor of an advisory body, one member who was marked as present, and two members that were absent.

Anna Corning recognized Committee members for comments regarding if they want to add requirements for City Council action with certain thresholds of resident assembly approval. Committee members shared their thoughts and concerns relative to including that language in the Charter. Michael Ward from the Collins Center was available to provide feedback on comments that were made by Committee members and noted that there is value to including specific language in the Charter. After discussion it was decided to not vote on this current topic and to continue to move forward to the next topic.

The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Ellen Shachter who made a motion for the City Council to establish one Resident Assembly per City Council term and to be added to the Mandatory Specifications Section (section 3) of the draft language.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Kaleb Abebe – Yes

Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Yes

Mosammat Faria Afreen – Yes

Nikolas Bowie – No

Kevin Chen – Absent

Max Clermont – Absent

Jennifer Gilbert – Yes

Kai Long – Yes

Patrick Magee – Yes

Mina Makarious – Yes

Lisa Peterson – Yes

Ellen Shachter – Yes

Susan Shell – Yes

Jim Stockard – Yes

Kathleen Born – Yes

Yes – 12, No – 1, Absent – 2. Motion passed.

Anna Corning opened discussion to Committee members to continue the conversation related to the Powers section of the draft language of Resident Assembly. Committee members were invited to share their comments and suggestions on how they would like to move forward with the proposed language. Anna Corning and the team from the Collins Center were available to provide responses to any questions or concerns. Member Nikolas Bowie was also available to review and provide more detail on the proposed language that they submitted to be included in the draft language ahead of the meeting.

The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Susan Shell who made a motion to adopt the Power Section (section 2), section a.i. of the draft Resident Assembly, Section 2.a.i, to read: The power to issue recommendations on questions posed by the city council and to specify

deadlines by which the city council or city manager must publicly respond to the recommendations by hearing or other means.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Kaleb Abebe – No
Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – No
Mosammat Faria Afreen – Yes
Nikolas Bowie – Yes
Kevin Chen – Absent
Max Clermont – Absent
Jennifer Gilbert – Yes
Kai Long – Yes
Patrick Magee – Yes
Mina Makarios – Yes
Lisa Peterson – Yes
Ellen Shachter – Yes
Susan Shell – Yes
Jim Stockard – Yes
Kathleen Born – Yes

Yes – 11, No – 2, Absent – 2. Motion passed.

The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Nikolas Bowie who made a motion to allow the City Council to delegate its statutory powers to a resident assembly.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Kaleb Abebe – No
Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – No
Mosammat Faria Afreen – Yes
Nikolas Bowie – Yes
Kevin Chen – Absent
Max Clermont – Absent
Jennifer Gilbert – No
Kai Long – No
Patrick Magee – No
Mina Makarios – No
Lisa Peterson – No
Ellen Shachter – No
Susan Shell – No
Jim Stockard – No
Kathleen Born – No

Yes – 2, No – 11, Absent – 2. Motion failed.

The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Lisa Peterson who made a motion to allow the City Council to give power to a Resident Assembly that they can consider whether an initiative petition that met a certain threshold set by the City Council should go to the City Council for approval or go to the voters for approval.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Kaleb Abebe – Yes
Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – No

Mosammat Faria Afreen – Yes
Nikolas Bowie – Yes
Kevin Chen – Absent
Max Clermont – Absent
Jennifer Gilbert – No
Kai Long – Yes
Patrick Magee – No
Mina Makarios – No
Lisa Peterson – Yes
Ellen Shachter – Yes
Susan Shell – No
Jim Stockard – Yes
Kathleen Born – Yes
Yes – 8, No – 5, Absent 2. Motion passed.

Anna Corning recognized Elliott Veloso, First Assistant City Solicitor from the Law Department who shared concerns relative sections 2.a.iii and 2.a.iv, noting that there could be a conflict of laws with the proposed language due to State Law and reminded members that State Law supersedes Municipal Law. Elliot Veloso was available to respond to clarifying questions from Committee members.

The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Jim Stockard who made a motion to adopt Section 2.i.2.a.ii of the proposed draft language of Resident Assembly to read: The power to issue endorsements or counter-endorsements for initiatives submitted to the City Council or voters, including initiatives that satisfy Section _'s procedural requirements. Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

**Kaleb Abebe – Yes
Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Yes
Mosammat Faria Afreen – Yes
Nikolas Bowie – Yes
Kevin Chen – Absent
Max Clermont – Absent
Jennifer Gilbert – Yes
Kai Long – Yes
Patrick Magee – Yes
Mina Makarios – No
Lisa Peterson – Yes
Ellen Shachter – Yes
Susan Shell – No
Jim Stockard – Yes
Kathleen Born – Yes
Yes – 11, No – 2, Absent – 2. Motion passed.**

The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Susan Shell who made a motion to adopt Section 2.ii.2.a.iii of the proposed draft language of Resident Assembly to read: Powers that

would otherwise be exercised under state or municipal law by a city board or commission, including the Planning Board.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

- Kaleb Abebe – Yes
- Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – No
- Mosammat Faria Afreen – Yes
- Nikolas Bowie – Yes
- Kevin Chen – Absent
- Max Clermont – Absent
- Jennifer Gilbert – No
- Kai Long – Present
- Patrick Magee – No
- Mina Makarious – No
- Lisa Peterson – No
- Ellen Shachter – No
- Susan Shell – No
- Jim Stockard – No
- Kathleen Born – No

Yes – 3, No – 9, Present – 1, Absent – 2. Motion failed.

The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Kaleb Abebe who made a motion to adopt Section 2.iii.2.a.iv of the proposed draft language of Resident Assembly to read: The power to dispense with requirements under state or municipal law for public hearings and public comment, provided that the Resident Assembly’s procedures comply with federal and state constitutional requirements of due process.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

- Kaleb Abebe – Yes
- Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Yes
- Mosammat Faria Afreen – No
- Nikolas Bowie – Yes
- Kevin Chen – Absent
- Max Clermont – Absent
- Jennifer Gilbert – No
- Kai Long – Absent
- Patrick Magee – Yes
- Mina Makarious – No
- Lisa Peterson – Yes
- Ellen Shachter – No
- Susan Shell – No
- Jim Stockard – No
- Kathleen Born – No

Yes – 5, No – 9, Absent 3. Motion failed.

The Chair, Kathleen Born recognized member Jim Stocked who made a motion to adopt Section 2.iv.2.a.v of the proposed draft language of Resident Assembly to read: The power,

on its own initiative, to make recommendations or propose draft legislation for review by the City Council or voters.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Kaleb Abebe – Yes

Jessica DeJesus Acevedo – Yes

Mosammat Faria Afreen – Yes

Nikolas Bowie – Yes

Kevin Chen – Absent

Max Clermont – Absent

Jennifer Gilbert – Yes

Kai Long – Absent

Patrick Magee – Yes

Mina Makarios – Yes

Lisa Peterson – Yes

Ellen Shachter – Yes

Susan Shell – No

Jim Stockard – yes

Kathleen Born – Yes

Yes – 11, No – 1, Absent – 3. Motion passed.

Anna Corning thanked Committee members for their time and reviewed what would be discussed at the next meeting.

The Charter Review Committee adjourned at approximately 7:40p.m.

Attachments:

Attachment A – clean version of Resident Assembly draft language.

Clerk’s Note: The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. This is a permanent record. The video for this meeting can be viewed:

https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/589?view_id=1&redirect=true&h=0219e4be40d17cd83ad2f4c9f905c572

October 18, 2023

Dear Fellow Committee Members,

As we near the end of our deliberations and begin to think about a final report to the City Council, I wanted to touch base about how this report might come together in as collaborative way as possible.

We voted on to recommend an entirely new Charter. We agreed that the existing 1940 Plan E charter should be entirely re-written. We took on the task of going through a typical Charter structure, section by section, as the Collins Center consultants and our Lead Staff Anna Corning submitted drafts for committee discussion.

As we moved through these deliberations, we held a number of votes, “straw” votes, and votes to “move forward with deliberations based on a particular option.” Sometimes, in order to focus our discussions when there were multiple options, we did informal verbal polling.

Each of these “votes” or other actions has been reflected in meeting minutes provided by the Assistant Clerk and approved by our Committee.

Some of these votes reflected a 2/3 “super-majority” while others reflected a closer divide. Several of these votes were taken with the explicit understanding that there would be another opportunity to “re-vote” on the particular aspect of the Charter that we had covered.

For instance, when we voted to move forward on the “Form of Government” (Council-Manager vs Strong Mayor), we explicitly did so with the understanding that there would be another vote later in our deliberation...which there will be. Please let me or Anna know, by email, if you have other suggestions for specific votes or sections of the Charter which merit re-consideration.

As we begin to think about our final report to the City Council, I am mindful of the ordinance requirement that our recommendations for a new Charter be forwarded with a 2/3 majority. While I am hopeful that will be the case, I am also preparing for a situation where we can agree to forward a report that explains our deliberations, includes sections of a new charter where there was a 2/3 agreement and identifies sections of a new charter where there was a majority agreement but not a 2/3 agreement. In that case, I would propose that our final report would include dissenting opinions, for which I will call for volunteer drafters. I hope that the final report, inclusive of any dissenting opinions, will have unanimous support to be forwarded to the City Council as a full and accurate accounting of our deliberations.

Regards,

Kathleen Born
Chair, Cambridge Charter Review Committee

Resident Assembly Draft Decision Points

1. Do you want to establish a Resident Assembly in the Charter?
 - i. Yes - (Move forward with Resident Assembly discussion)
 - ii. No - (No Resident Assembly at all)

Yes – 12, No – 0, Absent – 3. Motion passed.

2. Does the committee approve the purpose section of the Resident Assembly Draft (1. Purpose)
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No

Yes – 10, No – 2, Absent – 3. Motion passed.

3. Does the committee want the charter to establish whether the resident assembly is a decision-making or advisory body (and have the next CRC review)?
 - i. Decision Making
 - ii. Recommend next CRC considers decision making after Resident Assembly has been put into practice.

Straw Poll: Decision-Making - 9, Advisory - 3, Present - 1, Absent - 2.

** Added Decision Point: City Council to establish one Resident Assembly per City Council term and to be added to the Mandatory Specifications Section (section 3) of the draft language.

Yes – 12, No – 1, Absent – 2. Motion passed.

** Added Decision Point: Power Section (section 2), section a.i. of the draft Resident Assembly, Section 2.a.i, to read: The power to issue recommendations on questions posed by the city council and to specify deadlines by which the city council or city manager must publicly respond to the recommendations by hearing or other means.

Yes – 11, No – 2, Absent – 2. Motion passed.

4. Does the committee want to add requirements for city council action with certain thresholds of resident assembly approval (2b.)
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No

N/A per the previous vote.

5. Does the committee want to allow city council to delegate its statutory powers to a resident assembly? (2.a.iii.)
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No

Yes – 2, No – 11, Absent – 2. Motion failed.

6. If yes, does the committee want to specify additional powers/options for a Resident Assembly?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No

b. If Yes, what other powers? - *new suggestions from committee member*

**** Added Decision Point:** to allow the City Council to give power to a Resident Assembly that they can consider whether an initiative petition that met a certain threshold set by the City Council should go to the City Council for approval or go to the voters for approval.

Yes – 8, No – 5, Absent 2. Motion passed.

- i. 2.a.ii. The power to issue endorsements or counter-endorsements for initiatives submitted to the city council or voters, including initiatives that satisfy Section _'s procedural requirements.

Yes – 11, No – 2, Absent – 2. Motion passed.

- ii. 2.a.iii. Powers that would otherwise be exercised under state or municipal law by a city board or commission, including the planning board.

Yes – 3, No – 9, Present – 1, Absent – 2. Motion failed.

- iii. 2.a.iv. The power to dispense with requirements under state or municipal law for public hearings and public comment, provided that the Resident Assembly's procedures comply with federal and state constitutional requirements of due process.

Yes – 5, No – 9, Absent 3. Motion failed.

- iv. 2.a.v. The power, on its own initiative, to make recommendations or propose draft legislation for review by the city council or voters.

Yes – 11, No – 1, Absent – 3. Motion passed.

To Be Voted on 10/24

7. What language does the committee want to include regarding the selection process?
 - i. Sortition (selection by lottery, using a random representative sample).
 - ii. Simple Random Lottery
8. Does the committee wish to specify a minimum number for a resident assembly?
 - i. Yes (if yes, think about what number)
 - ii. No
9. Does the committee approve the discretionary specifications section?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No

“DISCRETIONARY SPECIFICATIONS.

- a. Subject to the other provisions of this section, the city council has discretion to define, by ordinance, other specifications of a Resident Assembly, including:
 - i. The time and place of the Resident Assembly's deliberation.
 - ii. Issues or questions upon which the Resident Assembly must deliberate.
 - iii. The procedures by which the Resident Assembly deliberates.
 - iv. The length of term for members of the Resident Assembly.
 - v. The method by which members of the Resident Assembly may be replaced.”

Elections - Decision Points

1. Does the committee want to maintain PR system in Cambridge?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
2. Does the committee want to enshrine 16 and 17-year-olds eligibility to vote in municipal elections?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
3. Does the committee want to enshrine non-citizen eligibility to vote in municipal elections?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
4. Does the committee want to change eligibility to run for municipal elected office?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
5. Does the committee want to move municipal elections to even years to align with statewide and presidential elections?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
6. Does the committee want to establish a Campaign Finance Study Committee in the Transition Provisions?

Draft Text:

Within 6 months of the adoption of this charter, the city council shall create a Campaign Finance Committee to study public financing mechanisms and prepare recommendations with the goal of making running for office in Cambridge more accessible. The study committee shall consider a full range of options, including but not limited to voucher programs, campaign spending, and contribution limits. The committee shall provide an analysis of the potential benefits and barriers of each option. No action is necessary if the city council has already taken action consistent with this provision.

The committee shall consist of _ members: one shall be a representative of the Elections Commission or designee, two shall be community members appointed by the city council, two shall be community members appointed by the school committee, and two shall be community members appointed by the city manager. The committee shall elect a chair and establish the schedule of its meetings.

The committee shall issue recommendations to the city council AND/OR the next charter review committee within 12 months of creation. The city council shall take action (or refer recommendations to next charter review committee?) on the recommendations within 90 days of receipt.

7. Does the committee want to recommend election procedure language be changed to authorize the election commission to use modern tabulation methods (sec. SECTION 7-__ METHODS OF COUNTING FIRST CHOICES in draft elections article)?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
8. Does the committee recommend the remaining election procedures and relevant laws be compiled, updated, and drafted by the City, Election Commission, and Law Department? (section 7-__ in draft elections article)
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No

ARTICLE 7 ELECTIONS

SECTION 7-1: CITY ELECTION (Based upon MGL Chapter 43, Sec. 109.)

The regular municipal election shall take place on the Tuesday next following the first Monday of November in every **even**-numbered year.

SECTION 7-2: ELIGIBILITY OF VOTERS (Based upon current House Bills 3576 and 671)

Every citizen and noncitizen with legal immigration status who (i) is at least 16 years old, (ii) is not temporarily or permanently disqualified by law because of corrupt practices in respect to elections, (iii) is a resident of Cambridge at the time at the time they register and (iv) has otherwise complied with the requirements of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 51 may have their name entered on the list of voters in Cambridge and may vote therein in any municipal election.

SECTION 7-3: PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION.

All members of the city council and the school committee shall be elected at large by proportional representation.

SECTION 7- METHODS OF COUNTING FIRST CHOICES

(Revision of language in the repealed MGL Chapter 54A, which is followed by the City of Cambridge with respect to voting procedures.)

Any method of counting the voters' first choices and treating any such choices in excess of the quota, ~~provided for under any system of proportional representation which on January first, nineteen hundred and thirty-eight was in effect for the purpose of municipal elections in any city of the United States~~, may be substituted for the method of counting such choices set forth in this chapter, if the registrars of voters determine that such substitution is advisable; provided, that they issue regulations embodying the method so substituted and provided, further, that such regulations shall not be effective with respect to

any election unless at least thirty days prior thereto copies of such regulations are available for delivery to such of the voters as may request them.

SECTIONS 7-__ and following:

[The remaining procedural sections of the charter that have been adopted by Cambridge require updating by the Elections Commission and the Law Department in line with current best practices, modern language, the use of modern voting equipment, and current legal requirements.]

Elections - Supplemental Information

1. Eligibility in Municipal elections.

Recommending to include two changes to eligibility, that the city council has previously submitted special acts to the state. 1) Lowering the voting age to 16 and 2) allowing non-citizens to vote in municipal Elections. Currently, there are six other communities in Massachusetts that have current special legislation at the state level to make one or both of these changes at the municipal level.

The Joint Committee on Elections Laws held a hearing on June 21st, 2023 where state representatives and senators as well as the public were able to make statements regarding these (and other election-related) changes. It's unclear what the next steps are for these pieces of legislation at the state level. <https://malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/4610>

a. Allow 16-and-17 year olds who are otherwise eligible, to vote in all Cambridge municipal elections.

General Bill - <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/S438>

Cambridge Bill - <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/H3576>

Massachusetts

There are four other municipalities in Massachusetts that have current bills at the state legislature requesting this change. Including:

- Southborough - 17-year-olds
- Northhampton - 16/17-year-olds
- Somerville - 16/17-year-olds
- Boston - 16/17-year-olds

In previous sessions other municipalities have had bills before the legislature: Shelburn, Ashfield and Wendell.

U.S.

Outside of Massachusetts: Tacoma, MD currently allows 16-and 17-year-olds to vote in all local elections, as does Hyattsville, Takoma Park Greenbelt, and Riverdale Park, MD. Oakland and Berkley, CA have lowered the voting age to 16 for school board elections.

San Francisco recently, in 2016, put this charter amendment to voters and it was defeated 52 to 47 percent.

Arguments

Advocates of this change argue:

- Youth are highly affected by education policy and school board decisions
- “The 26th Amendment to the US Constitution, which lowered the voting age to 18, was passed because of the clear double standard of making 18-year-olds fight for their country when they didn’t have a political voice. The idea that anyone directly affected by political decisions should have a right to voice their opinions on such decisions should not be limited to only military conscription.”

- Youth are politically knowledgeable and score higher than their adult counterparts in civic understanding
- Youth voter participation can have a positive affect on turnout overall for a household, in addition to the early establishment of voting as a habit

Critics argue:

- Youth might lack the ability or motivation to efficiently engage in elections
- Some argue youth might not take the responsibility seriously or be knowledgeable enough on the issues presented

Resources:

[Classroom Magazines: Should Teens Be Allowed to Vote?](#)

[Youth Rights: Voting Age](#)

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0002716210382395>

Professors Daniel Hart and Robert Atkins argue that 16- and 17-year-olds should be able to vote in both state and federal elections by identifying the core components of citizenship and illustrating that 16- and 17-year-olds possess them.

[Are People More Inclined to Vote at 16 than at 18? Evidence for the First-Time Voting Boost Among 16- to 25-Year-Olds in Austria](#)

Political scientists Eva Zeglovits and Julian Aichholzer examine voter turnout of people aged 16 to 17 in Austria and conclude lowering voting age contributes to higher voter turnout rates.

b. Allow non-citizens who are otherwise eligible, to vote in all Cambridge municipal elections.

General Bill - <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/H712>

Cambridge Bill - <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/H671>

Massachusetts

There are three other municipalities in Massachusetts that have current bills at the state legislature requesting this change. Including:

- Sharon - permanent resident aliens
- Amherst - lawful permanent residents
- Northhampton - noncitizens

Previously other municipalities have made an initiative or submitted bills before the legislature: Boston, Newton, Brookline, Wayland, Shelburn, Ashfield and Wendell.

U.S.

Outside of Massachusetts: Oakland, MD, and San Francisco, CA allow non-citizens to vote in school board elections. Eleven towns in Maryland enfranchised non-citizens for all local elections: Barnesville, Cheverly, Chevy Chase, Garrett Park, Glen Echo, Hyattsville, Martin's Additions, Mount Rainier, Riverdale Park, Somerset, Takoma Park. Two Vermont municipalities Montpelier and Winooski recently made this change, as did Washington, DC.

New York City City Council passed legislation in 2021 extending the right to vote in municipal elections to lawful permanent residents and other non-citizens authorized to work in the US (800,000 individuals).

However, following a lawsuit in early 2023 claiming the law diluted the vote of “legitimate U.S. citizens.”. New York State Supreme Court for Staten Island overturned the law, ruling it violated the state constitution.

[Noncitizens’ Right to Vote Becomes Law](#)
[Noncitizens’ Voting Right Change - Ruling](#)

Arguments

Proponents:

- Supporters state that Noncitizens are established parts of the community, living, working, paying taxes, and attending school they deserve to have a say
- Supporters argue often timelines between work permission and citizenship can often take decades, leaving residents out of the political process

Opposition:

- Several states have made state constitutional amendments (with varying language) specifying only citizens are eligible to vote at all election levels including, Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Ohio, Louisiana, Arizona, Minnesota, and North Dakota.
- Opponents suggest this change will disincentivize non-citizens from striving to become lawful citizens.
- Similarly opponents argue it is a violation of the constitution

Resources

[Noncitizens allowed to vote spurs backlash](#)
[Understanding voting rights](#)
[Our City Our Vote](#)
[Ballotopedia - Arguments for and against noncitizen voting](#)

2. Change Municipal Elections to Even Years in November

Recently, Cambridge sees turnout rates typically in the low 30s for municipal elections and 50-80% in state and/or presidential elections. Within Massachusetts, cities and towns have similar or lower levels of turnout in their local elections.

Cambridge Election Turn Out

2022 State Election	52%
2021 Municipal Election	33%
2020 State/Presidential Election	75%
2019 Municipal Election	32%

Several communities outside of Massachusetts have moved their municipal elections to even years including Florida, Washington, Texas, California, Colorado and New Mexico. Many of these changes are recent, so there isn’t documentation on the change in turnout.

San Francisco previously elected their city council on even years and the mayor on odd years. Mayoral elections saw turnout rates in the low 40s, but in council/state/ president elections the turnout rate ranged from 65-85 percent.

California passed legislation requiring any city with turnout more than 25% lower in local elections than in the most recent presidential elections must change their city elections to even-years

Based on Cambridge election data, even year turnout is at least 1.5 and sometimes as high as 2.5 times higher than the previous years odd year turnout.

Possible Charter Language: “Regular Elections. The regular city election shall be held on the Tuesday following the first Monday, in November in each even-numbered year, and every 2 years thereafter. “

Argument:

Proponents:

- Elected officials are less responsive to the general public because they are only directly accountability to a small fraction of voters.
- Will have a positive effect on voter turnout
- Advocates also suggest this isn't a solution for all elections-related concerns including informed and engaged voters but is an important step to reduce barriers

Opponents:

- Logistical hurdles and complications in the implementation of this change, especially in Massachusetts where elections are run at the city level rather than the county level
- Another common criticism is that local politics will be drowned out by statewide and national races. And some question if it would lead to increased turnout but not engagement, or ballot drop-off.

Resources

[Governing: Voter Turnout Plummeting in Local Elections](#)

[Research Brief Odd Year vs Even Year Consolidated Elections in California](#)

[Governor Oks Consolidated Most Local Elections](#)

[Michigan House Votes](#)

[MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS AND VOTER TURNOUT IN LOCAL ELECTIONS](#)

[Boulder Voters Approve Move to Even Year City Council Elections](#)

[Committee - Elections Data](#)